UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

July 15, 2019
Shelly Leachman

On the Come Up

Talk about a rapid ascent.

In its Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2019 global ranking by academic subjects, the prestigious ShanghaiRanking places UC Santa Barbara at No. 5 in the field of communication.

UC Santa Barbara — the only California institution in the top 20 for communication — rises from No. 8 in the same ranking in 2018 and No. 13 in the subject ranking in 2017.

“I am thrilled to see that our Department of Communication has moved into the top five globally, but not at all surprised,” said Charles Hale, dean of social sciences. “The strength of departmental faculty in all four dimensions — research, teaching, professional activities and service — is truly outstanding, and they richly deserve this important recognition. I extend to them my hearty congratulations.”

Noting her department’s “quick climb” in the rankings, Norah Dunbar, professor and chair of communication, credited both its faculty and its students for this prominent new recognition.

“The communication faculty at UC Santa Barbara work very hard to stay on the cutting edge of what communication research should really be about — they study social media and new technologies and how those affect relationships and organizations in a variety of ways,” said Dunbar, who studies deception and credibility. “We also have a strong graduate program. Our graduate students work

side-by-side with faculty on our research teams and in our labs — and the research that we do could simply not be done without them.

“We are a small department, especially compared to others in the top 10,” she continued, “so the fact that we are so highly ranked speaks to the quality and importance of the work being done because these world rankings reflect the quality of publications as well as the prestigious awards that faculty have won. For such a small department to achieve this is something for UC Santa Barbara to be proud of.”

The department has deep historical roots on campus. Its progenitor, going back to 1947, was the Department of Speech. By the 1980s it had evolved into Communication Studies and then, over time, became simply Communication. And it took off from there. In addition to its growth in myriad rankings, the department’s faculty and students continue to garner recognition and win awards.

Communication at UC Santa Barbara is broadly based in the social sciences, with emphases in three primary research areas: interpersonal communication, media communication and organizational communication. Faculty routinely work in more than one of these areas, and students also are encouraged to explore the intersections and overlaps between them.

More than 4,000 universities were ranked across 54 subjects in natural sciences, life sciences, medical sciences, social sciences and engineering for ShanghaiRanking’s 2019 ARWU list. Indicators include measures of research productivity, research quality, extent of international collaboration and research with top quality and the highest academic recognitions.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.